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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ 19 January 1954

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Probable Reactions of the UK, France, and West Germany to Certain US Courses of Action regarding Berlin

In response to your request for a memorandum regarding the problem and the assumptions noted below, the Board of National Estimates submits the following.

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the reactions of the UK, France, and West Germany to a US proposal for the prompt use of forceful measures in the event of a Soviet blockade or action tantamount to a blockade of Berlin.

ASSUMPTIONS

A. That Soviet or East German measures have reached a point threatening the access to Berlin of the Western Allies, West Germany, or both.

B. That the Western Allies have held the Soviets responsible for these measures, and have affirmed their right and intent to maintain their positions in Berlin and unrestricted access thereto, and their objection to the Soviet or East German measures, which have nonetheless been continued or increased.

C. That the US and the Western Allies have not instituted an airlift to supply Berlin, (other than for purposes such as personnel transfer, special needs, etc.).

D. That, by virtue of its stockpile, Berlin is not in physical distress or in prospect of being so within a period of 3 to 6 months.

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E. That the US proposal calls for the use of limited military force, initially "to the extent necessary to determine Soviet intentions" (e.g., by armed convoy under orders not to shoot except in self-defense), thereafter "to attempt to re-open access to Berlin" (e.g., by armed convoy under orders to shoot if prevented from going through). In either case the US would make clear to its allies its belief "that Berlin is not militarily defensible and that if determined Soviet armed opposition should develop when US units attempt to force their way into or out of Berlin, no additional forces would be committed, but resort would have to be made to general war".

F. That the US would propose, or would already have initiated, measures to step up US readiness for war.

DISCUSSION

1. The British, French, and West Germans would almost certainly not regard a new blockade of Berlin as equivalent to a deliberate initiation of general war by the USSR. They would, therefore, insist that every effort be made to achieve an end of the blockade without resorting to acts which might result in general war even though not intended to have such a result. They would expect these efforts to be continued over a considerable time, and would wish to leave ways open to the USSR to retreat from its position without unacceptable loss of prestige. In order to gain time for negotiations, they would probably insist on an airlift. We do not believe that the British, French or West Germans would consent to the prompt use of forceful measures to test or break the blockade.

2. If the US should proceed promptly with the contemplated course of action despite the opposition of its allies, and should thereby become involved in war with the USSR, most official and popular European opinion would hold that the war was due to US impetuosity, and that it could have been avoided. Under these circumstances, the British, French, and West Germans would almost certainly feel no obligation to join the US, and would use their best efforts to stop the war if possible. The governments

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would probably wish to join the UK if the war could not be stopped, but popular opposition and fear of Soviet attack would probably force a postponement of decision for a considerable time, if Soviet actions permitted.

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